

6 May 1981
MSK-1006

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report--Seoul Bureau--April 1981

I. GENERAL

A. Spring finally came to Korea, ending what seemed to be an interminably long and very cold winter and allowing staff to shed bulky but inexpensive locally-made winter coats. In fact, we almost had a heat wave with temperatures approaching 70° on several days. The end of the month saw the onslaught of the high-velocity "Yellow Wind" which annually comes in off the Gobi Desert and seemingly blows yellow dust right through the walls!

B. With spring a young man's fancy allegedly turns to thoughts of love, which must have prompted Bureau Editor [] to STAT announce his engagement to Chinese Monitor [] The Bureau STAT staff was invited to a gala engagement party at a local Chinese restaurant, preceded by a traditional Chinese ceremony complete with signing and witnessing of "contracts" by the happy couple and official "matchmakers." [] plan to marry as soon as the necessary STAT paperwork is complete and are looking forward to honeymooning on the beaches of Waikiki.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. Okinawa Cruising Monitor [] completed a two-week STAT survey of bureau reception on 14 April. The survey got off to a shaky start when Bernie discovered several of our beverage antennas were not functioning properly. The problem went unreported as the antennas in question are used by our Chinese monitors who simply switched to rhombics and were content as long as they were hearing their programs. Problems notwithstanding, Bernie completed check of all primary 1 and 2 targets.

2. Seoul YONHAP News Agency installed landline service to the Bureau on 4 April. Changeover from RTT was made at their request, presumably to eliminate possibility of rerun requests. Charges for the new landline service remain unchanged. It should also be noted that quantity of useful items from YONHAP is significantly improved over what we were getting from its predecessor, HAPTONG. Embassy Economic Section also reports it is very pleased with the YONHAP Economic News Service items we have been passing to them which contain useful reporting on ROK commodity dealings and other material not available elsewhere.

3. Ulaanbaatar MONTSAME Russian and English coverage was transferred from Okinawa to Seoul on 27 April to give Okinawa's Russian monitor more time for Soviet satellite transmissions. However, MONTSAME casts are broadcast during our midnight shift when no technician is on duty and our teletypists are unable to successfully copy the Russian casts which for the time being must be fed over the dedicated circuit from Okinawa installed primarily for live feed of KCNA English transmissions. Our teletypists can tune and print the 1700 English cast with no difficulty. Regional Engineer [] STAT has suggested a printer modification which may make tuning of the Russian casts easier once the parts are received and installed.

4. Our coverage of DPRK TV programming is encountering problems due to sporadic delivery of tapes from the local supplier. The last batch was received on 10 April and the word is that personnel shifts are to blame for the sudden hiatus but the project is expected to be back on track very soon.

5. Our Korean Unit had a rather busy month processing lengthy speeches occasioned by the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly session, Kim Il-song's birthday and the anniversary of the Korean People's Army. Tensions were briefly heightened along the DMZ on 16 April when a North Korean soldier defected, leading to a lengthy small-arms shootout across the demarcation line but with no casualties reported on either side. An interesting sidelight to the story came to light when during initial interrogation the defector was found to be carrying on his person "seven cigarettes, a box of matches and a hairpin, the use for which was not identified," according to the ROK Defense Ministry announcement. Seoul university student demonstrations, another annual spring rite, were much less spirited than in the past. Several arrests were made but no serious violence reported. The Embassy political team feels the government has a pretty tight rein on the student situation and expects no major incidents in May, the first anniversary of last year's bloody Kwangju riots.

B. Technical

1. The beverage antenna problems noted above were mostly resolved by month's end. Army technicians at FSK Pyongtaek remote site installed 300 feet of antenna wire received from Okinawa, replaced a transformer and TMC box on one beverage and cleaned contacts on others. On the advice of [] further work on the antennas will be performed in the near future by a local contractor, Korea Communications Engineering. Bureau Chief Technician [] and a KCE representative visited Pyongtaek on 28 April to survey project and promised a cost estimate by 1 May, but as of this writing KCE reports it is still working on it and will get back to us soon.

C. Lateral Services

1. The 500th MIGP at Camp Zama, Japan, has asked Bureau for our Pyongyang Video Selection Lists and permission to request selected tapes. With Headquarters concurrence, an arrangement similar to that in effect with [] has been implemented whereby tapes are STAT sent directly to consumer if not requested by Headquarters consumers within 30-day retention period. FCS will be responsible for sending Zama those tapes wanted for viewing in Washington.

2. Embassy Communications Unit has received permission to make increased use of our backup Mode V circuit for a relatively heavy load of incoming unclassified traffic to alleviate congestion on its regular circuit. Most of this added traffic is received during the midnight shift and as yet is not an undue burden on our teletype unit. Technically, C&R still retains operational control of the Mode V circuit.

III. ADMINISTRATION

Personnel

1. New Korean monitor candidate [] entered on STAT duty 13 April but resigned after only two days of orientation and training. He told us he is "too weak for this hard work" and expressed misgivings over ever being able to master the technical aspects of monitoring. This obviously came as quite a surprise to us because of the very thorough pre-employment briefings given him and his numerous conversations with monitors on various aspects of the job. A search has already begun to fill the vacancy. One possible candidate is currently working in Taejon for the Peace Corps which is ending its operations in Korea this summer.

2. Teletype Unit Chief [] announced on 30 April thaSTAT he plans to resign by the end of May in order to emigrate to the States, specifically Philadelphia where he has relatives. Teletypist candidate [] will EOD on 4 May to fill a previous vacancy in the unit. STAT A search for another candidate is underway.

3. Shift scheduling problems for FSN employees will be easier to handle in the future now that we have received the Embassy Personnel Officer and RAMC Bangkok's approval to implement the same rules on holiday pay that apply to U.S. staff; that is, if an employee's regularly scheduled day off falls on a holiday he will receive holiday pay if he has worked 10 days in the pay period. Previously, at embassy insistence, the employee was listed as having holiday off and was given another day off elsewhere in the pay period to compensate. As locals get both U.S.

and Korean holidays, this often disrupted shift scheduling, particularly when there was more than one holiday in the pay period. The embassy Personnel Officer was previously assigned to Bangkok and recalled having the same question raised by the FBIS bureau there and phoned RAMC to confirm legality of change.

4. The Embassy finalized plans during the month for its annual wage survey of local companies to determine the 1981 FSN pay raise. The U.S. Army has almost finished its survey and predicts this year's increase will be a maximum of 20 percent. Deadline for embassy submission of data to State is 5 June and implementation of any wage increase is expected in August.

5. The new medical insurance program developed for Embassy Korean employees has been approved at the Washington level by the agencies concerned and payroll deductions into the plan began with the first pay period after 1 April. FBIS and local employees each contribute 1.5 percent of base salary into the plan and employees will be eligible for compensation in July, once a 3-month pool of contributions has been accumulated.

IV. VISITS

1. Okinawa Cruising Monitor [] from 30 March to 14 April, for survey of Bureau reception. STAT

2. Bureau Chief [] on TDY to Headquarters for annual Bureau chiefs conference, on 23 April. STAT

[] STAT

Acting Chief, Seoul Bureau, FBIS

Attachments:

Production Report
Engineering Report

cc: Chief, []
Chief, Okinawa Bureau

STAT